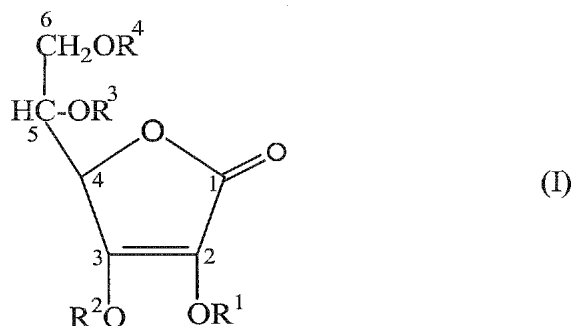


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A compound of the general formula I:



wherein R¹ is a C₂-C₂₂ C₈-C₁₈ acyl group, an amino acid group, or a C₁-C₁₇ alkyl group; R² is ammonium, ~~or~~ a monovalent metal cation of Na⁺ or K⁺, a divalent alkaline earth metal cation of Mg⁺⁺, Ca⁺⁺ or Ba⁺⁺, or a trivalent metal cation of Al⁺⁺⁺ or Fe⁺⁺⁺; and each of R³ or R⁴, independently, is hydrogen, a C₂-C₂₂ acyl group, an amino acid residue, or a C₁-C₁₇ alkyl group.

2. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R² is ammonium or a monovalent metal cation ~~selected from~~ of Na⁺, or K⁺, or Li⁺.

3. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R² is a divalent alkaline earth metal cation

~~selected from~~ of Mg^{++} , Ca^{++} , or Ba^{++} or a trivalent metal cation
~~selected from~~ of Al^{+++} or Fe^{+++} .

4. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^2 is ~~selected from~~ Na^+ , K^+ , Mg^{++} , or Ca^{++} .

5. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is a C_2-C_{22} C_8-C_{18} carboxylic acyl group derived from a straight or branched, saturated or unsaturated carboxylic acid selected from acetic, propionic, n-butyric, isobutyric, sorbic, n-valeric, isovaleric, caproic, caprylic, capric, undecanoic, lauric, tridecanoic, myristic, pentadecanoic, or arachidonic acid.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim ~~6~~ 5 wherein R^1 is capryloyl or palmitoyl.

8. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is the residue of a natural α -amino acid such as glycine, alanine, serine, leucine, isoleucine, phenylalanine, tyrosine or glutamic acid.

9. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is the residue of glycine.

10. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 and R^4 are hydrogen, R^2 is ammonium, ~~or~~ a monovalent metal cation ~~selected from~~ of Na^+ or K^+ , a divalent alkaline earth metal cation ~~selected from~~ of Mg^{++} , Ca^{++} or Ba^{++} or a trivalent metal cation ~~selected from~~ of Al^{+++} or Fe^{+++} , and R^1 is a C_8 - C_{18} acyl derived from a fatty acid.

11. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 10 wherein R^2 is a monovalent metal cation selected from Na^+ , or K^+ , ~~or~~ Li^+ or a divalent metal cation selected from Mg^{++} or Ca^{++} .

12. (Original) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 and R^4 are hydrogen, R^2 is Na^+ and R^1 is capryloyl.

13. (Original) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 and R^4 are hydrogen, R^2 is Na^+ and R^1 is palmitoyl.

14. (Previously Presented) A composition comprising as an active ingredient a compound according to claim 1.

15. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for treatment of conditions, diseases or disorders associated with vitamin C deficiency and/or where a supplemental administration of vitamin C may be beneficial.

16. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for treatment of cancer.

17. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 16 further comprising lipoic acid or a chemotherapeutic agent.

18. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 15 for enhancement of the immune system.

19. (Withdrawn) A nutraceutical composition according to claim 14, optionally comprising other nutraceuticals.

20. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical or nutraceutical composition according to claim 14 adapted for oral administration, optionally in the form of micro/nanocapsules confining an effective amount of the compound of formula (I).

21. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for topical use.

22. (Withdrawn) A cosmetic composition according to claim 14 together with cosmetic applicable carriers, excipients or diluents.

23. (Withdrawn) A cosmetic composition according to claim 22 for topical application for skin care.

24. (Withdrawn) A cosmetic composition according to claim 23 for reducing fine lines, wrinkles or skin roughness, skin whitening or stimulation of collagen synthesis.

25. (Withdrawn) A cosmetic composition according to claim 24 for use as anti-aging agent.

26. (Withdrawn) A cosmetic composition according to claim 24 for treatment of photodamaged skin.

27. (Withdrawn) A cosmetic composition according to claim 22 in the form of a lotion, cream, gel, or in liquid form.

28. (Withdrawn) The cosmetic composition according to claim 22 for use as moisturizing cream, anti-ageing cream, anti-wrinkle cream, sunscreen cream, skin whitening and for stimulating collagen synthesis.

29. (Withdrawn) The cosmetic composition according to claim 22 further comprising one or more active ingredients such as vitamin E, vitamin P, retinol, retinol esters, hyaluronic acid, and/or algal extracts.

30. (Withdrawn) A dermatological composition according to claim 14 for treating or controlling skin states or conditions associated with vitamin C deficiency and/or where a supplemental administration of vitamin C may be beneficial.

31. (Withdrawn) A method of skin care, particularly for reducing fine lines, wrinkles and skin roughness, or for stimulation of collagen synthesis in a mammal in need thereof, which comprises topically administering a composition comprising a compound of general formula (I) of claim 1 to said mammal in need.